

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office
Hidden Valley Road
Carlsbad, California 92009
Phone: 760/431-9440
Fax: 760/431-9624

News Release



<http://carlsbad.fws.gov>

(SC)

04-032

Contact: Jane Hendron, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office – 760/431-9440 ext. 205

For Release: April 8, 2004

PUBLIC COMMENTS REQUESTED ON TWO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SPECIES PROTECTION PROPOSALS

Public Hearing Scheduled in Carlsbad, California

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a notice today announcing the availability of draft economic analyses related to proposed critical habitat rules for the San Diego fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta sandiegonensis*) and the coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*)

A separate notice was published today by the Service seeking comments and information on the taxonomy of the coastal California gnatcatcher subspecies and whether the California gnatcatcher in the United States should be listed as a distinct population segment.

Public comments on proposed critical habitat and the draft economic analyses for the San Diego fairy shrimp and coastal California gnatcatcher will be accepted until May 10, 2004.

Written comments and materials related to the California gnatcatcher taxonomy issue and the Service's consideration to list the California gnatcatcher in the United States as a distinct population segment will be accepted until May 24, 2004.

Public hearings on the proposed critical habitat rule, draft economic analyses and the coastal California gnatcatcher taxonomy issue are scheduled for April 29, 2004, at the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, California. Hearings will be held from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm and from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

The Service published a proposed rule on April 22, 2003, to designate approximately 6,098 acres of land in Orange and San Diego counties as critical habitat for the San Diego fairy shrimp.

Total economic impacts associated with the listing and proposed designation of critical habitat for the San Diego fairy shrimp are estimated to be up to \$54.6 million, with an annualized impact of \$5.2 million. This estimate includes areas proposed as critical habitat as well as essential habitat that the Service did not include in the proposed rule.

On April 24 2003, the Service published a proposed rule to designate critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher on about 495,795 acres of land in southern California.

The draft analysis estimates that if all areas proposed as critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher are designated, total impacts could range up to \$915.3 million over the next 23 years. Annualized impacts would be approximately \$113.4 million.

Under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, Federal agencies are required to consult with the Service to ensure that projects they authorize, fund, or permit do not jeopardize the continued existence of a federally listed species or adversely modify designated critical habitat.

The economic analyses for the coastal California gnatcatcher and San Diego fairy shrimp identify the combined impacts related to the listing of these species under the Act and the proposed designation of particular areas as critical habitat.

“The Service has significantly refined its methodology for economic analyses,” said Steve Thompson, Manager of the Service’s California/Nevada Operations Office. “The analyses for the gnatcatcher and San Diego fairy shrimp include a comprehensive array of potential costs to Federal, State and local governments, and private entities related to the listing and critical habitat provisions of the Act.”

Based on a review of the economic impacts associated with designating a particular area as critical habitat, the Secretary of the Interior has the authority to exclude an area from designation if the benefit of exclusion is greater than including it as critical habitat.

In the April 2003 proposed critical habitat rule for the coastal California gnatcatcher, the Service also considered whether and how the listing of the coastal California gnatcatcher should be amended. Consideration of possible listing of the California gnatcatcher in the United States as a distinct population segment is based on recent taxonomic research published by Robert M. Zink and other researchers.

To improve the clarity of our rulemaking process, the Service will develop separate final rules to designate coastal California gnatcatcher critical habitat and address the species’ taxonomy and distinct population segment issues.

Written comments and materials on the proposed designation of critical habitat, the draft economic analysis, and information pertaining to the 2000 paper published by Zink et al., can be submitted in writing to the Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, California 92009. Comments and materials may also be sent by facsimile to 760/431-9618.

Electronic comments may be submitted as follows: for comments related to the San Diego fairy shrimp, please send them to **fw1sdfs@r1.fws.gov**. Please send electronic comments

on the coastal California gnatcatcher proposed critical habitat, economic analysis, or proposed listing of a distinct population segment to **fw1cfwocagn@r1.fws.gov**. In the event our internet service is not functioning, please submit your information using the alternate methods described above.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 Fish and Wildlife Management offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visit our home page at <http://fws.gov>

- FWS -